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INDEXA

EXTRA EDITION



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Special Issue

Lakshadweep Islands—Agatti (2007) By Glenn Johnson, W0GJ

After a successful Andaman Island (VU4) Hamfest and DXpedition, NIAR (National Institute of Amateur Radio), began organizing for Lakshadweep Islands, the #2 Most Wanted DXCC entity.

After a lot of effort, permission was finally obtained for activation. Just like on the Andamans, a venue had to be developed to allow foreign hams to get landing permission in the Lakshadweeps, as entry permission is tightly controlled. A Hamfest was this venue. In mid-2006, things were arranged for operation on three islands with three groups of foreign operators. Later, permission was granted for a group of Indian hams to activate Minicoy Island, the #1 Most Wanted IOTA. No foreigners are allowed access to Minicoy.

I was part of the International Advisory Committee, working with NIAR and Bharathi to obtain permissions. I was assigned to lead the Agatti Island group. After several months of intensive plan-



Agatti Island in the Lakshadweeps as seen from a satellite.

ning for January 2007, rescheduling for December 2006 and then rescheduling again for January 2007, we lost 3 of our originally scheduled 15 operators. One operator couldn't make his connections to India at the last minute.

Eleven of us from six countries arrived almost simultaneously in Cochin, India, on January 9. Our original ferry to the Lakshadweep Islands was scheduled for January 11. Just before our departures from home, the ferry was rescheduled to January 12 with arrival on Agatti in the afternoon of January 13, giving us exactly one day to set up all of our antennas and stations.

The way things worked out, we needed these extra days to get our unaccompanied baggage cleared through the red tape of customs. We had been told and promised that our 1000 pounds of antennas, coax, wires and

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radios could be just picked up and we'd be on our way. Nothing could have been farther from the truth. Even at the 11th hour, we didn't know if we would be getting our equipment. To make a long story short, the title of the shipping manifest had a typo and the technicalities of customs in India demanded everything to match. We ended up paying several hundred dollars for duty and handling fees, getting our equipment literally only hours before our departure to the islands.



INDEXA Board Chairman, Bob Allphin, K4UEE, reflects the irony of how a single typographical error in an equipment manifest can result in such a long delay in clearing customs



In a typical DXpedition fashion, the required equipment to provide all the planned modes and bands for the deserving, grows and grows until several hundred kilograms of materials have been gathered. Everything must be fully and accurately documented on the manifest.

After transferring all of our luggage and equipment to the ferry boat, 24 hours later we found ourselves transferring by a couple small boats to the most gorgeous of tropical islands with pure white coral sand and beautiful palm trees. Robinson Crusoe would have been jealous!

While on the ferry, we reviewed our Operations Manual and made assignments for a quick deployment and erection of our antennas. We did not know exactly what our room situation would be. As it turned out, it would be ideal.

We stayed at the Agatti Island Beach Resort, a very nice resort on the south end of the 7 mile long island. There was perfect white sand everywhere! We were on the west side of the island, but where we were, the island is only 2-300 yards wide. We had perfect unobstructed shots to Europe and North America. To Asia and Japan, we only had a few

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palm trees obstructing the path.

Our “hotel” rooms were nice and cool. Our rooms were located adjacent to one another, located just feet from a meeting hall, which became our operation headquarters.

Agatti Island has a population of about 8000, 100% Muslim. From the pictures, you can see Agatti Island is beautiful. The Agatti Island people are very proud of their island. Literally once a week, the ENTIRE island is raked and swept to keep it neat and clean all 8 miles of the island!

The island has a somewhat remarkable array of solar cells to provide a very reliable power source for the island. With the strong sunlight found in Agatti, the array is capable of producing 100 KW of electrical power.



Our rooms and ham shack were right on this wonderful white sand beach. A little bit of paradise.



Main Street — Agatti Island



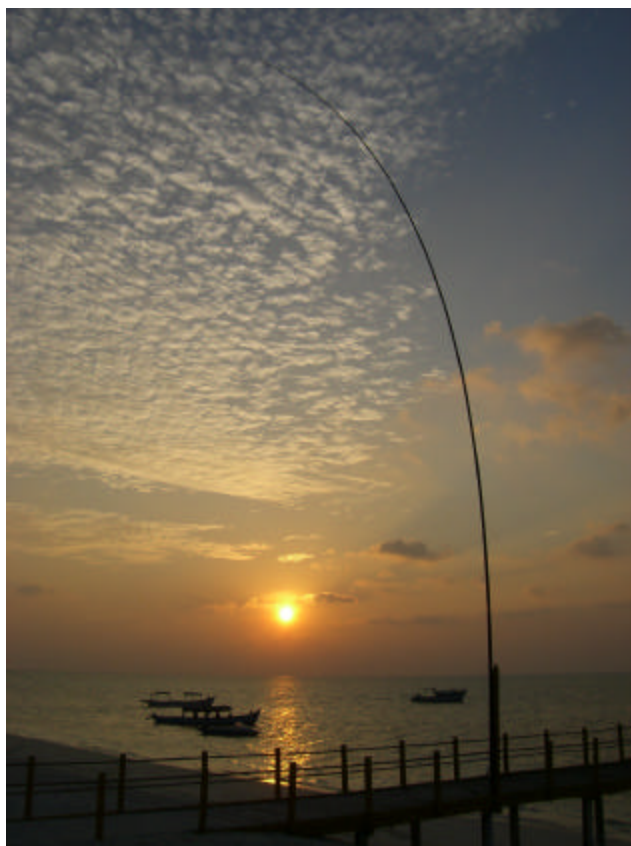
100 KW Solar Array serving the needs of Agatti

When it came time to get down to radio business, we scheduled 3 hour operating shifts—some back to back. Thankfully, our resort restaurant was very accommodating, and they actually changed their meal times to match our shift changes. Our food was wonderful! We all gained weight!

We want to thank ICOM for lending us ICOM 756 Pro III's for our five stations. MicroHAM provided microKEYER interfaces that mated our radios to the computers and also did the CW and RTTY interfacing. We used WriteLog on our laptops. Basically each station was the same with I.C.E. 419B bandpass filters. The five stations were dedicated to 160 & 17M, 80 & 12M, 40 & 10M, 30M and 20M. SteppIR provided two 2-element beams.

On the following pages, for those with a technical interest, we'll give you're a rundown on our antenna farm:

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Top, Left: 160M: A top-loaded vertical at the water's edge. This antenna netted 2152 Q's with 133 North Americans in the log! Nothing like a salt-water based vertical at the grayline!!!

Top, Right: 80M: A pair of phased top-loaded verticals right at the high tide mark with a combination of elevated radials and radials in the salt water. Most of our evenings (NA mornings) we would find it best to beam long path and most of our mornings (NA evenings) we would find it best short path. We netted 4425 Q's with an incredible 1015 North Americans in the log!

40M: Arno brought a 4-Square Array from Austria. The directivity of this antenna was incredible! We netted 5992 Q's with 1240 North Americans in the log.

30M: Out on the jetty over salt water, we placed a 30m antenna. We had a station dedicated to this band because it was open about 20 hours per day. We netted 6494 Q's with 898 North Americans in the log.

Lower, Right: For 20, 17, 15, 12 & 10M, we had two Step-pIR 2-element beams, each about 10 meters high. We used these in all directions, usually beaming perpendicular to the fixed SVDA's.



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Right: For 20, 17 and 15M, we had a pair of SVDA (Switchable Vertical Dipole Arrays) for each of these bands that could be switched to long path or short path. Planted right at the high tide mark, these antennas were killers!

Our Agatti Island Q count for the upper bands were:

20M – 7156
17M – 7397
15M – 4523
12M – 2001
10M – 710

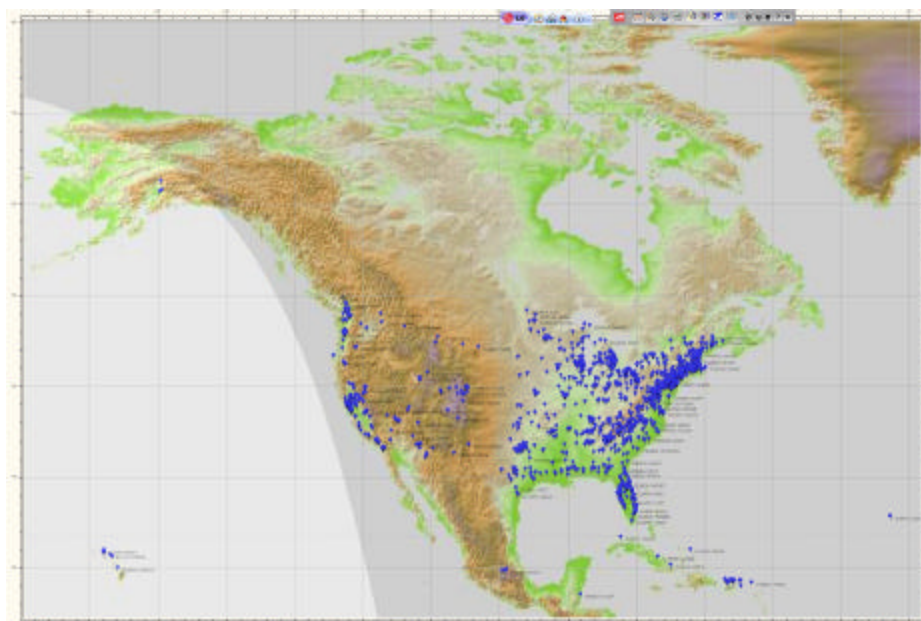


Our total number of duped-removed contacts was 40,851 with 5759 North Americans in the log. (14% North Americans) 78% of our contacts were CW, 5% RTTY and 17% SSB.

Our emphasis was on the hard to get North and South American stations and to fill the need for CW contacts from VU7. Many times a day, we would leave high rate European runs to ask for North/South America stations. We would often leave the high run rates to go to slower lower bands as the grayline passed.

Our pilots—Dr. Bill K6GNX in California, Don N1DG in Massachusetts, Bill W4ZV in North Carolina and Klaus DL1XX in Germany—were sending us SMS messages on our cell phone many times a day, alerting us to band openings to our hard to reach areas. Without their help, we wouldn't have had as much success with North America.

Pictured below is our geographical distribution of contacts with North America. For this period of the sunspot cycle, the team was most pleased that we were able to make as many Q's as we did on the low bands.



Left: Our North American low band (160-40M) contacts!

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Brought to you by. . .



Multinational teams were on Agatti, Bangaram, and Kadmat Islands. A team on Minicoy was composed exclusively of hams from India because only Indian nationals are permitted to go there. Pictured to the left is the team that operated from Kadmat. Because of the distance separating us all, we never saw the members of the other teams!

Yet, **INDEXA's** presence was felt and appreciated by all who sought to give the world a chance to put Lakshadweep in their logs. All teams appreciate the financial help given by organizations such as INDEXA, corporations, and individual contributors who helped make this DXpedition possible.



VU7RG Agatti Island Team

L-R: Steve (VE7CT), Arno (OE9AMJ), Neil (VA7DX), Madison (W5MJ), Paul (W8AEF), Joe (DK5WL), Glenn (W0GJ), Franz (DL9GFB), Bob (K4UEE), Jun (JH4RHF), and Darwish (A61M0).

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Our team was the most compatible, hard working and fun team I've ever had the privilege of working with on a DXpedition! The **Agatti Island Team** was composed of the following operators:

Austria:	Arno Metzler	OE9AMJ	United States:	Bob Allphin	K4UEE
Canada:	Neil King	VA7DX		Madison Jones	W5MJ
	Steve Wright	VE7CT		Paul Playford	W8AEF
Germany:	Joe Pick	DK5WL		Glenn Johnson	W0GJ
	Franz Berndt	DL9GFB			
Japan:	Jun Tanaka	JH4RHF			
UAE :	Mohammed Darwish	A61M			

Bangaram Island Team:

WA6UVF	Ellen Parker
JA3NHL	Tak Yokouchi
JR3MVF	Mio Myoshi
JA3UB	Jiro Myoshi

Minicoy Island Team: (VU7MY)

VU2BL	Bhanu
VU2JOS	Jose Jacob
VU2UWZ	Madhu Mohan
VU2RBI	Bharathi Prasad
VU3DSM	Mahathi

Kadmat Island Team:

AA4NN	Joe Blackwell
N6TQS	Doug Faunt
WA9QJH	Adolph Kryger
SP3DOI	Les Fabjanski
SP3CYY	Jan Ambrozy
DF2IC	Greg Fisser
DL4KQ	Frank Rosenkranz
DL5OAB	Bernd Willeke
DL7DF	Siegfried Presch
F4EGD	Sylvain Lefevre
F5CWU	Florent Moudar
F6IIT	Pat Vermote
PA2R	Rob Snieder
PA3EWP	Ron Stuy
VU2NIS	Nisha Mohan

The total number of contacts made by the four island teams: 110,000

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